

settings will result in data which has been influenced by differences in interpretation of the scale, providing support for the FDA's perspective that VAS can provide a 'false sense of precision'. This has implications for international clinical trials in which data pooling is required. This study allowed for a critical appraisal of the VAS response format which will assist in the collection of more valid data in multinational studies.

PMC51

UTILITIES OF THE EQ-5D: TRANSFERABLE OR NOT? INFLUENCE OF THE NATIONAL VALUE SETS OF THE EQ-5D ON THE INCREMENTAL UTILITIES OF TWO HEALTH STATES
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OBJECTIVE: In contrast to effectiveness of health care interventions, health states preferences might not be transferable between countries. A frequently used instrument to measure health-related quality of life is the EQ-5D, which has been developed to compare preferences across countries. Although the impact of using any of the fifteen national EQ-5D value sets on utility estimates is known, the impact on the incremental utility is unknown so far. **METHODS:** First, the relative influence of the EQ-5D domains on the utility estimate was assessed for each of the fifteen currently existing value sets. Second, two health states (21232 and 33321) were selected for further analyses. With the help of the two hypothetical health states we determined the influence of one or two point deteriorations of the health states. Based on this, the fifteen value sets were used to calculate incremental utility scores. **RESULTS:** Differences can be perceived between the value sets and between the valuation methods in the preferences for the domains of the EQ-5D. The utility scores of health states show that the differences between the value sets are substantial. Next to that, the dissimilarities between the increments of the deteriorations of the health sets are large, independent of which valuation method is used. **CONCLUSION:** All results indicate that the differences between the value sets are considerable and should not be ignored. The magnitudes of the coefficients of the domains vary in a great extent, which causes dissimilarities when calculating the incremental utilities. As a consequence it can be concluded that the utility scores are not transferable across countries.

CONCEPTUAL PAPERS & RESEARCH ON METHODS—Study Design

PMC52

LINGUISTIC VALIDATION OF THE FRENCH FOR CANADA WORK PRODUCTIVITY AND ACTIVITY IMPAIRMENT QUESTIONNAIRE, GENERAL HEALTH VERSION (WPAI:GH)
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OBJECTIVES: No measures of health-related absenteeism and presenteeism have been validated for use in French-speaking Canada. It is important to understand how illness affects an employee's productivity and therefore an organization's profitability; when ill, an employee may take a sick day (absenteeism) or attend work despite the illness and experience a loss of work efficiency (presenteeism). The WPAI-GH, a leading measure of these work productivity indicators, has not yet been tested in French Canada to test for both clarity of translation and item comprehension. Before using a French translation of an available English-language questionnaire, the linguistic validity of this new version must be established to ensure its conceptual equivalence

to the original as well as its cultural appropriateness. The objective of this study was to evaluate the linguistic validity of the Canadian French version of the Work Productivity and Activity Impairment questionnaire, General Health Version (WPAI:GH). **METHODS:** A Canadian French translation of the US English WPAI:GH was created through a reiterative process of creating harmonized forward and back translations by independent translators. French-speaking subjects residing in Canada self-administered the WPAI:GH and were subsequently debriefed by a bilingual (French-English) interviewer. **RESULTS:** Thirty French-Canadian subjects were interviewed, all of whom were currently employed at the time of the interview. The group was stratified by educational level, including an equal number of participants both with and without a high school degree. The WPAI:GH item comprehension rate was 97.2%; no response revisions were offered by any of the subjects. Responses to hypothetical scenarios indicated that the French for Canada language version adequately differentiates sick time taken for health and non-health reasons and between absenteeism and presenteeism. **CONCLUSIONS:** Linguistic validity of the French for Canada translation of the WPAI:GH was established among a diverse French Canadian population, including those with minimal education.

PMC53

IS UTILITY A LINEAR FUNCTION OF LIFETIME?

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OBJECTIVES: In economic evaluation it is often assumed that utility is a linear function of lifetime. The aim of this study was first to test the assumption of linearity, for short increases in longevity, and second to test whether there exists a minimum threshold below which life extensions are not utility bearing. **METHODS:** A representative sample of the population (n = 2,400) was asked to imagine that they had a limited remaining lifetime (1 year or 10 years) and were offered a treatment that would increase lifetime by 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32 weeks (1 year perspective) or 2, 3, 8, 12, 32 or 52 weeks (10 years perspective). In each perspective, the price of treatment was constant per week life extension (i.e. constant proportions of acceptance across formats would indicate a linear utility function). Additionally, respondents were asked about their maximum willingness-to-pay (WTP) for the life extension. **RESULTS:** The proportions that accepted the treatment offer to the given price increased with increasing extensions (1 year: 48%, 54%, 55%, 59%, 59%, 61%; 10 years: 55%, 60%, 62%, 66%, 65%, 76%) indicating a convex utility function. In maximum WTP, the groups of respondents with increasing and diminishing marginal utility functions were of similar sizes. The proportions with zero WTP for the treatment declined from 34% for one week life extension to 14% for 52 weeks. The results were confirmed in various econometric models. **CONCLUSIONS:** While most health care programmes offer life extensions of less than one year, considerable proportions of the population may be unwilling to pay anything for such gains. For life extensions up to one year, most of the results indicate an increasing marginal utility function for lifetime.

PMC54

THE RIGOUR, FLEXIBILITY AND EASE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF SYSTEMATIC SEARCH STRATEGIES—DO WE NEED AN INDUSTRY STANDARD METHODOLOGY?

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OBJECTIVES: Systematic reviews have become increasingly important in recent years, particularly to inform the inclusion of